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J. M. Endlich

Barbados

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(From the *American Naturalist*, March, 1882.)

BARBADOS.

BY F. M. ENDLICH.

AS the good ship *Solent*, of H. M. Royal Mail Service, is slowly steaming into the main harbor of Barbados, a small flotilla of boats gradually accumulates around her. Boats of all sizes, of many colors, and in variable conditions of seaworthiness, contain a motley crew of black oarsmen. While following alongside of the steamer these enterprising substitutes for hackmen keep incessantly shouting, with many gestures:

"Mastah! mastah! here's de boat for ye; take ye right in; go wid de boat of Christopher Columbus; come right 'long, now."

Christopher Columbus is appropriately clad in linen trousers, which once may have been white. The capacious folds of a sea-green "duster" envelope his manly form, and a gray beaver hat with a broad mourning band surmounts his stately figure.

"Shut up dar, you black nigger," chimes in a thick-set darkey of the most pronounced type; "don't go wid dat fellow, mastah; come wid your own little Snow-drop!"

It is refreshing to note under the sub-tropical sun, even, this energy of competition. While passengers are listening to the alluring words of numerous boatmen the ship has anchored and everything is made ready for transfer to the shore. A short time must still elapse before the baggage and its owners can be placed into the tossing boat; meanwhile a new scene presents itself. Rapidly approaching is a skiff propelled by the arms of a strong man. Within it are three or four boys and young men supplied with only a minimum of wearing apparel. Resting a few yards from the steamer the mysterious young darkeys make known the object of their visit:

"Trow down sixpence, mastah! trow him in de watah, far out; trow him far out!"

Compliance with this apparently unreasonable request immediately proves them to be expert divers. With eager eyes and an attitude of intense excitement they closely watch every movement of the passengers who may be standing at the rail. A slight splash may be seen in the water, at once followed by that of four human bodies. Often the coin is recovered even before its last glitter has faded into the dull gray of the water. It is a rare case, indeed, that any sixpence should escape their eyes. Although oc-

casionaly a shark's fin may be seen in close proximity, the divers ply their vocation without paying any attention to the rapacious animal. Not until either patience or small change of passengers has been exhausted will the dripping youths take their departure, seeking fresh fields for their novel enterprise.

Finally the baggage and personel of some particular party is safely stowed away in a rickety boat, which bears the name "Pearl of the Ocean" emblazoned in yellow letters on a pale green ground, and the pull for land is begun. Rowing along and between the various craft which lie anchored here, the breakwater is at last passed and the boat glides smoothly along to one of the wharves. Generally the steamers anchor nearly a mile out, and a fine view of the harbor is afforded during the shoreward trip. The breakwater is a solid stone structure, extending outward for some distance. All boats and smaller ships enter within the shelter it affords and there discharge cargoes. As vessels are constantly arriving and departing, the scene here is one of great interest.

Bridgetown, on the leeward side of the island, is the capital of Barbados. Steamers of various lines stop within its harbor, exchanging freight and passengers. Dozens of lounging darkies, famous for their insolence, line the landing places, and protest to be most anxious to serve every new-comer in any capacity whatsoever. Disinterested as this excessive politeness and attention appears to be at first glance, it is soon changed to disappointment and loudly expressed anger when a successful competitor among them has secured a satchel or trunk and marches off in triumph. That much reviled class, so prominent in our more civilized country, the hackmen, would certainly blush at their own bashfulness and maidenlike shyness could they but join the band of vociferating darkies on the docks of Bridgetown. With the proverbial inconsistency of the children of this world, the rejected candidates turn their wrath upon the unfortunate stranger who has given offence by not employing the entire tribe. Recovering speedily, however, a new victim is attacked and the same scenes are rehearsed. Bridgetown is not well supplied with hotels, and the wanderers usually congregate at the hostelry where Mr. Kingsley is said to have met with so inhospitable a reception upon his arrival at night.

The island of Barbados, most prominent among the Windward

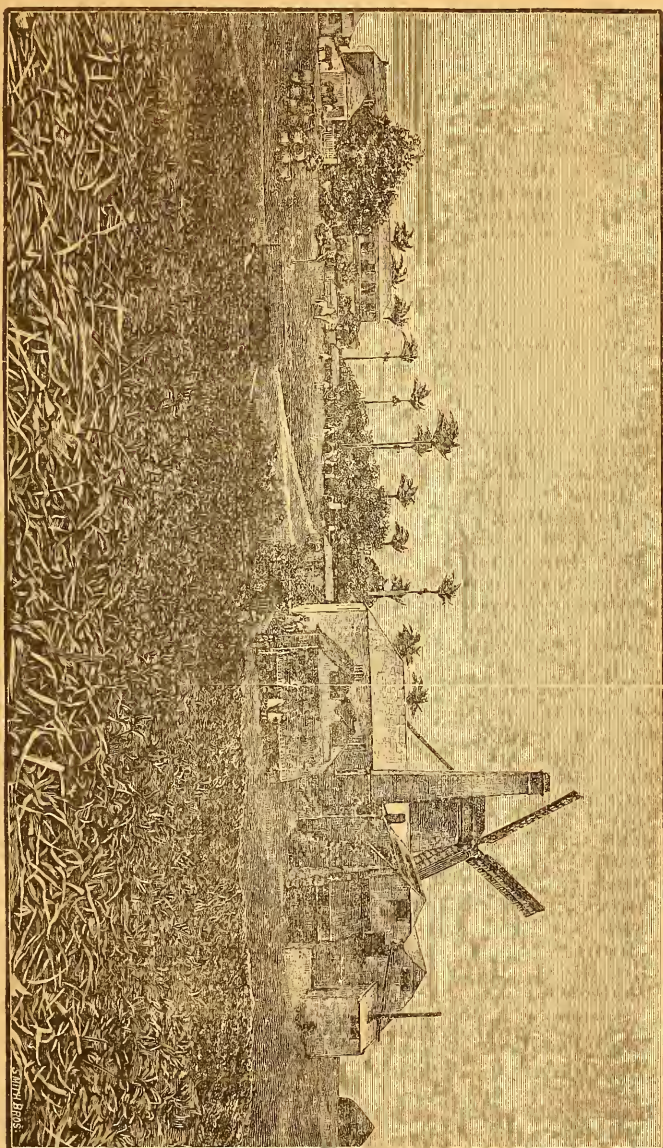
Group, was discovered early in the seventeenth century by Portuguese seafarers. It was taken possession of by British subjects, and settlements were started in 1625. Since that time it has been ruled under the British flag. Until 1627 the island was the property of the Duke of Marlborough, then was transferred to the Duke of Carlisle, and in 1652 was attached under colonial charter to the British crown. During the two and a half centuries that have passed over this flourishing colony its inhabitants have developed an independent, self-reliant character. Dissensions from the opinions of the home government, interior disturbances by insurrection of the colored population, earthquakes and hurricanes, have failed to disturb the proud, hospitable spirit of planters "to the manner born." In 1816 the most dangerous revolt of the negroes laid in waste more than sixty plantations in four days. At present the protection of life and property, by adequate provisions, is made an object of special consideration, and serious trouble is no longer apprehended.

Geologically speaking, the island is coralline in origin and rises to an elevation of about 800 feet above sea level. Gentle slopes, admirably fitted for a high degree of cultivation, characterize its general appearance. Seen from the sea the bright green canefields, separated from each other by roads of glistening whiteness, produce the impression of one great garden. This, indeed, is scarcely lessened when traveling across country, where one estate joins the other, where dozens of sugar-mills in sight betoken the industry and prosperity of planters. But little timber remains on the island, having been removed for various economical purposes. "Parishes" represent the subdivisions of the total area, and a population of about 170,000 inhabitants testifies to the density of settlement.

Bridgetown contains about 50,000 souls. Narrow, irregular streets indicate the older portions of the town. Fine villas and country houses are located in the suburbs. Small wooden huts shelter large families of negroes, while but a short distance off, perhaps, may be the dwelling of an European, who has surrounded himself with everything that good taste and continental habits may require. Large gardens, indicating well developed horticultural ideas on the part of owners, surround the villas. Often the luxuriant vegetation completely hides the dwelling from view, with a climate so admirably adapted to plant life, it is not surpris-

ing that many people should cultivate flowers and shrubs. To see plants which grow only in green-houses in the fatherland

Clifton Hall Estate.



scattered in profusion over broad grounds, is so fascinating a sight that its influence can hardly fail to affect individual taste. Prominent among the structures of the town is the "Government

Building." An excellent material for architectural purposes is obtained by simply quarrying the coralline rock. It is readily dressed, well adapted to withstand the effects of the moist climate, and is of dazzling whiteness. Trying as this latter property may be under a tropical sun, the effect is certainly imposing. Within the Government Building are located the legislative, judiciary and postal departments. The colonial parliament holds its sessions there, and often the proud spirit of the "true-born Barbadian" has found vent in impassioned speech, defending the colony from real or fancied encroachments upon its rights and prerogatives on the part of the home government. Able minds have there espoused the cause of their native island, and more than once has the introduction of home-measures been withdrawn in consequence. In all matters, however, not pertaining directly to the colony, its citizens are intensely loyal. Frequent visits to the homes of their childhood, as well as the education of sons at the Alma Mater which once sheltered their fathers, tend to sustain the bond which distance and separate interests might gradually weaken. The executive is represented by a Governor, who is appointed from Great Britain, and to whom legal and other assistance is afforded by the Attorney General, the Colonial Secretary, and officers specially appointed. "Government House" is his residence. It is surrounded by grounds which must appear charming to the northern eye. Luxuriant tropical plants, fostered by the hands of skilled gardeners, a tasteful distribution of flowers, shrubs and trees render the park one of great beauty. Within the mansion the visitor meets with apartments typical of the tropics. Large, high rooms, spacious halls, and a subdued elegance at once denote comfort and judicious consideration for sanitary arrangements. The Governor of Barbados has under his charge several other British islands of the Windward Group. Although each one is relatively independent, this partial centralization of executive authority is productive of good results. Difficulties can thus be more readily adjusted, and the similarity of interests assures coöperation.

Strikingly in contrast with the sable hue and light colored garments of the natives are the bright scarlet coats of English troops. A garrison of 800 men is kept at Bridgetown. By their presence the more or less turbulent spirit of the negro population is subdued and the power is at hand to check any sudden insurrection.

Picturesque among the "Red-coats" is the uniform of native East Indian troops, several companies of which are quartered here. Turbans replace the cap or helmet, wide trowsers and leggings the more civilized pantaloons. Of strong build and finely formed, these troops certainly present the appearance of a foe not to be despised. The policy of retaining men of totally different nationalities is one which, in case of emergencies, must be productive of good results wherever applicable.

Higher educational institutions are represented at Bridgetown by Codrington College. It is patronized by the sons of planters and merchants, and has furnished a number of men of considerable local prominence. The building is beautifully situated amidst tall palms and groves of flowering trees which only a tropical sun can produce.

Great interest is manifested by the inhabitants in religious matters. The leading denomination is the Church of England, but others are not wanting, notably the Wesleyan. Every "parish" has one or more churches, and Sunday is observed throughout with a rigor which would do justice to an old puritanical settlement. As is found to be the case elsewhere, so here, the colored population enters most zealously into the services.

Consistent with the character of the economic features of the island, is that of the settlers at the main port. Society in Barbados does not present many classes. Planters and merchants lead in wealth, while the government officials form a separate division distinguished for education and wide experience. Growers of produce are independent, and the complement is made up by workmen and not a few idlers. It is a noticeable feature that on the estates women are far better workers than men and are more reliable. Although a man may have no objections to pulling a heavy boat for several miles in a broiling sun for the compensation of but a few shillings, he would be indignant if requested to work in a canefield at regular and perhaps higher wages. Many of the colored women are tall, well-built, and they move through the streets in a stately manner, certainly never in a hurry. This effect is greatly enhanced by the long trains of their white or light-colored dresses, with which they conscientiously sweep the dusty streets.

Interesting material for study on evolutionary development may be found in the growth of a small girl to the dignity of wearing

a long white dress. No doubt, each successive step is to them of the same importance as to their more favored sisters of northerly climes. Covered with but the scantiest apology for a garment, or sometimes elaborately attired in nothing but a string of beads around the neck, the smallest members of the household attend to playing in undisturbed happiness. They are well treated by all and cry by far less than the average country children of our own homes. Entirely at liberty, they roam into the fields, secure a prize in the shape of a huge sugar-cane, and enjoy themselves in gradually chewing up several feet of it. As they grow up their wearing apparel improves. It would be difficult to draw the line sharply at which the most pronounced metamorphosis takes place. By the time they have arrived at an age of comparative usefulness, either at market or in the sugar-house, they have risen to the exalted position of wearing long dresses. While working or walking in the country a "reef" is taken in the dress below the waist. Huge earrings and bracelets begin to ornament the dusky skin and a tastefully draped turban of flashy color protects the head from the rays of a hot sun. The hair is plaited in short, stiff braids and is ornamented with beads and ribbons; a necklace, sometimes more than one, is added; rings with precious glass stones adorn the fingers, and the young woman is ready for an evening promenade. Her good figure and general ornamentation may attract the attention of some stalwart young boatman, and a deepening of color in the dark brown cheeks betrays the blush which his loudly expressed admiration has called forth.

An inconvenient narrowness of sidewalks in town forces pedestrians into the street. There may be found a motley accumulation of donkeys, men, women and children. Once in a while, a team drawn by six mules wends its way through the crowded thoroughfare, causing a decided swerving and sudden scattering of the mass of humanity. Here, as on the plantations, women take a leading part in active work. While a great, overgrown darkey may be perched on the top of a cart and allow himself to be drawn by a donkey scarcely larger than a Newfoundland dog, a woman will walk alongside, staggering under a heavy load which she carries on her head. It is amusing to see the accuracy with which these women balance on their heads large wooden trays filled with fruit or vegetables. Both hands free to manage the folds of their ample, flowing dresses, they pass along with heads

held high, ever ready for trade or for friendly gossip with some acquaintance they may chance to meet.

On Friday Bridgetown puts on its gayest colors. This day is devoted to the planters. From all parts of the island they enter the town, they buy and sell, exchange views and opinions with neighbors whom they see but once a week, and finish the day with a quiet rubber of whist or brandy and soda at their club-rooms. To them the news or the day is important, the fluctuations of the market value of sugar and its side-products become living figures. They have founded a "Commercial Exchange," where the latest dispatches and quotations are open to inspection. On this day, too, the "Ice House" becomes an important establishment. Essentially—in spite of the title—this is a restaurant. It is always supplied with ice, with the freshest and best viands, and with various luxuries as to which it seems to have the exclusive control. Every three months a shipload of ice arrives from Boston at Bridgetown. With it come fresh meats, vegetables, beer in casks, oysters in the shell (when in season), and other articles of food destined to tempt an islander whose thermometer usually ranges from 76 to 92 degrees.

For a long time Barbados has been one of the important sugar-producing islands. Every article of value is mentally compared with sugar; the weather is of no importance whatever, except so far as it may improve or injure crops, and the telegraphic news most eagerly read relate to the sugar market. To a stranger the singular unanimity of ideas upon this subject cannot but appear first ludicrous, then very much the reverse. Thorough cultivation of every available portion of the island, careful management and judicious treatment of both the growing canes and the cane-juice have resulted in a high average yield per acre and a total sugar production of about 60,000 tons a year. Molasses and rum are both manufactured as additional products and are exported in large quantities. Ginger is extensively cultivated and forms quite an important item in the trade. Driving over the smooth, white roads, fields of sugar cane are entered immediately after leaving the confines of the town. Prominent in the landscape are the gaunt arms of numerous windmills. Strangely as they may seem out of place at first, their appearance soon has a certain charm and awakens reminiscences of countries far removed from the tropics. Regular, constant winds render the mills a valuable and economi-

cal adjunct to the manufacture of sugar. Located upon rising ground, they furnish power for crushing the canes, thus extracting the juice. From this latter crystalized sugar is obtained by methods of boiling, more or less complex. Briefly reviewing the process of sugar manufacture, it may be stated as follows: The canes are cut, stripped of their blades, carted to the crusher, and the juice expressed. From there the latter is led into vats where an addition of lime assists clarification. It then passes to a series of kettles and is boiled down to a definite density. After being taken from the last pan the mass is allowed to cool and in part



Row of Noble Palms.

crystalize. As soon as the proper time arrives it is either filled into hogshheads and the molasses allowed to drain off, or the latter is removed in centrifugal machines. The article thus derived is directly marketable, but must be refined before acquiring the whiteness and firmness which the American retail consumer desires.

On the estates the planters with their families live in patriarchal comfort. Absence of means for rapid communication, the forgotten usages of the mother country, and their innate kindness, render them the most courteous and hospitable of hosts. Sur-

rounded by fields which soon will yield golden fruit, and working with an energy which wind, weather or a fluctuating market impose, they lead a regular life, interrupted only by questions of local government, and by attempts at sanguinary revolt on the part of idle or dissatisfied negroes. On high points, exposed to view for long distances, may be seen staffs with movable arms or other indicators. They serve as telegraphic signals, and a menacing attitude on any one plantation will soon be known all over the island. Thanks to good management, however, occurrences such as formerly devastated many plantations are becoming more infrequent from year to year.

Few places, perhaps, can be found which at one glance display so much quiet scenic beauty and at the same time so fully illustrate the power of man as expressed by his industry. Groves of mahogany trees, the slender, graceful form of the noble palm, the clearly cut shore line, and the blue sea beyond, are combined with highly cultivated fields and subservience of wind and water to the will of man.

The products of Barbadian industry are mainly the middle grades of sugar, which are largely exported to England. It seems strange to note, in view of this latter fact, that supplies and other materials are drawn from the United States to a great extent. American meats, canned fruits and vegetables, and even horses and mules, are met with everywhere. Owing to the climate, stock degenerates very rapidly, and neither serviceable animals nor good meat is raised on the island. An exception to this rule must be made in favor of the donkeys, however. Although of sorry appearance and presumably ready to lean up against the nearest post for support, these animals are capable of a prodigious amount of work. Disproportionate as the size of the little brutes and their loads may seem, they trudge steadily along, requiring only occasional physical admonition on the part of their drivers or riders.

On account of the thorough cultivation of the island but few wild fruits are found, and in consequence the table of the working classes is not the most varied one. Salt fish, bread and sugar cane form the staples. Codfish is imported in large quantities, and some of the native fish are prepared in a similar manner. Nearly every man, woman or child, returning from the fields, carries a long succulent cane. Often a small boy may be seen

attached to one end of a cane twice as long as himself, munching away lustily; the hard rind is gradually overcome, and the juice furnishes him his favorite nourishment. In addition to the nutriment obtained in this manner, such process of demolition furnishes an excellent means for passing the time. Few scenes are more ludicrous than seeing half a dozen lazy darkies, of various sizes, lying in some shady corner while munching long cane-stalks with the utmost solemnity. Poor as the fare may be, the people seem to require no better. In part, the indolence of the colored population may be explained by the climatal conditions of the island. Though rains are frequent and cooling breezes are not wanting, the mean temperature is such as to require but very scant clothing. Children are clad at a ridiculously small expense, and shoes are luxuries unknown until the female wearer blossoms into stately maidenhood. By this means one great incentive to work—the supply of clothing for the family—is reduced to a minimum. A few pence per week are ample to keep body and soul together, rum can be stolen, and both may be acquired with but little labor.

Among the native fish the “flying fish” ranks high as an article of food. At certain seasons it may be quite rare, and again appear in abundance. (In March, 1880, flying fish were selling at four cents per hundred at Bridgetown). During our stay we decided to indulge in the sport of catching them, which had been represented to us as an highly enjoyable pastime. A small fishing boat was accordingly chartered, together with a coal-black skipper and two men to assist him. Early one morning, long before sunrise, four of us, respectively “England,” “Nova Scotia,” “Scotland” and “America,” stood out to sea. With the usual forethought a sumptuous lunch had been packed into several baskets, rifles and shotguns were taken along to destroy sharks and secure seabirds. Fishing tackle and nets were supplied in abundance; also bait. Not many parties, perhaps, have started with more complete equipments. Our old, gray-haired skipper stood at the helm with imposing gravity while three poles were put up in the boat, and to each of them was attached a rag of triangular shape. Everything was shaky, the seats were very narrow, and our sporting accoutrements occupied by far the greater portion of available space. A brisk breeze, which had been blowing from the start, began to freshen up, the waves were gradually growing

higher, and within the first hour we were all comfortably drenched. This part of the programme seemed in keeping with the expedition, and we silently congratulated ourselves upon so auspicious a beginning. Before long, however, the sea continued making efforts to stow away a portion of its surplus water in our boat, and all hands were requested to "bail out." By means of hollow calabashes this feat was accomplished. After having gone out to sea about twelve miles sails were lowered and we lay tossing about and waiting for fish. All around us we could see the bright bodies of flying fish flash out from the crest of a wave, pass with great rapidity for some distance over the water, and then drop down again. Eventually a few curious individuals arrived, apparently to inspect the sides of our boat. During their examination they encountered sundry hooks, quietly opened their capacious mouths and allowed them to float in. One or two "flops" when brought on board, and they settled down, seemingly resigned, in the water at the bottom of the boat. This sport was surely growing exciting—but slowly. Thanks to the outward trip and the constant motion of our boat—thanks, too, to our elaborate breakfast, which had consisted of a glass of water—we four ancient mariners were beginning to experience a feeling which a novice on board of a ship might designate as "faint." An inexplicable want of energy, a certain absent-mindedness as to the fascinations of fishing, and a decided disinclination to attack our lunch baskets, became painfully noticeable. In order to revive our sunken spirits somewhat (we will generously accord him the benefit of a lingering doubt) our august skipper ordered the bait to be brought out. It was brought out. A basket of loose workmanship was filled with fragments of flying fish, which might have been alive two weeks before; at the time, however, they were very dead. This basket was hung over the side of the boat into the water. Evidently the fish appreciated the perfume which thus was spread far and wide, for they came in large numbers within easy reach of our nets. Whether it was the overpowering joy produced by our success, or whether it was grief at the sudden ending of so many fish lives, full of youth and full of promise, we must allow posterity to decide. It is enough to say that "Nova Scotia," "Scotland" and "America" ignominiously collapsed, and "the further proceedings interested them no more." Occasionally a cold, wet fish would alight on the pale face of one or

the other, but beyond a mild protest no action was perceptible. After a sufficient number of fish had been stowed away in the boat by "England" and the natives, the latter proceeded to do full justice to three-quarters of our elaborate lunch. Once more the sails were set and we sped homeward. Wave after wave passed over the dancing boat until finally the shore was reached. Wet, not hungry, trying to look cheerful, but nevertheless with a cart-load of fish to speak for us, we arrived at our hotel near noon. Strange as it may appear, it proved to be a rash undertaking, for some time to come, to mention "flying fish" within hearing of three certain sportsmen.

Barbados has become a prominent health resort, more particularly for fever patients from more southerly regions. For many years the island has been free from serious attacks of epidemic or endemic diseases. South of Bridgetown, a suburb, Hastings, is located, where good sea-bathing and comparatively cool air can be enjoyed. The climate is necessarily enervating, and any stimulant of such character is a welcome change. Many of the planters and merchants have traveled extensively, and their experiences in foreign countries have borne fruit in their own colony.

Once more the gauntlet of officious porters and boatmen must be run, as the southward steamer has anchored off shore. Laden with trophies from the island, with coral, shells and other equally bulky souvenirs, the traveler finds himself restored to his temporary floating home, and

"The ship drove past * * *
And southward aye we fled."

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